PRIVACY SHADE

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of provisional application 60/446,763, filed February 12, 2003, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The field of this invention generally relates to computer and video display screens, and more particularly to a shade for covering up information displayed on a computer or video display screen.

Background Art

[0002] Confidentiality is required in many industries. For example, the medical industry requires protection of health information under The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Further, individuals in any industry may value privacy and protection of information regardless of legal requirements.

[0003] Confidential information is often visible on a computer screen. The user of the computer may be required to leave the computer, and accordingly the confidential information, unattended for short times during the workday. However, people passing by such as patients, employees, vendors, and customers may intentionally or inadvertently see the information contained on the computer screen. Further, even when the computer is attended, a patient may unexpectedly approach a user and therefore have an opportunity to intentionally or inadvertently view the information contained on the computer screen. When there is no need for concealment, the user wants full view of the information on the screen. However, the user may want to conceal the

information on the screen quickly and easily. Accordingly, there arises a need to protect information on the computer screen from people passing by on an as needed basis.

[0004] Further, many medical computer programs do not have the capability to minimize the screen. Therefore, it is desirable to allow a user to protect information on the computer screen within requiring the user to minimize the screen.

[0005] It is therefore an objective of the present invention to provide an easy to use privacy shade for a computer screen.

[0006] It is another objective of the present invention to provide a privacy shade to provide a reasonable effort to protect health and other confidential information from the view of patients, employees, vendors, and customers on an as needed basis.

[0007] A further objective of the present invention is to provide a low-cost privacy screen for any visible screen that a user may wish to cover, such as a computer monitor or a television screen.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] To achieve the foregoing and other objects, and in accordance with the purposes of the present invention as embodied and broadly described herein, the privacy shade of the present invention comprises a shade that provides the quick concealment of information displayed on screens of computer monitors, television screens and DVD systems.

[0009] The privacy shade is a piece of flexible material of a shape and size to cover the viewing area of the screen and provide concealment of the information displayed on the screen when said material is in a down position. The material of the shade is attached to a top portion of the computer monitor such that the material covers the front of the screen when the shade material is in the down position.

[0010] Any appropriate fixture or material may be used to attach the shade to the computer monitor. For example, attachment means may be clips, hooks,

snaps, glue, or a hook and loop fastener such as VELCRO. The attachment means are placed on the top portion of the screen to be covered and/or the top portion of the privacy shade.

[0011] Once the privacy shade is attached to the screen to be covered, the privacy shade has two positions: the up position and the down position. In the up position, the privacy shade is lifted and draped over or on top of the screen. Therefore, in the up position, the screen is visible to the user. In the down position, the privacy shade covers the viewing area of the screen and provides concealment of the information on the screen.

[0012] The size of the privacy shade may be any appropriate size to cover the screen. The privacy shade is large enough to cover the viewing area of the screen, and therefore may vary depending on the size of the desired screen to be covered.

[0013] The privacy shade is made of any flexible material, such as cloth or plastic. The flexible material may easily be deformed into the up position or the down position as needed by the user. The flexible material therefore provides maneuverability of the shade that is easy and convenient for the user to utilize because it allows for quick and easy transition between the up position and the down position.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0014] The foregoing and other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following, more particular description of a preferred embodiment of the invention, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

[0015] FIG. 1 is a front view of the privacy shade of the present invention in the down position covering the screen of a computer monitor, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 2 is a side view of the privacy shade of the present invention in the down position covering the screen of a computer monitor, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 3 is a top view of the privacy shade of the present invention in the up position, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 4 is a side view of the privacy shade of the present invention in the up position, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 5 illustrates the privacy shade of the present invention in transition between the up position and the down position, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0020] A preferred embodiment of the present invention is now described with reference to the figures, where like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements. Also in the figures, the left most digit of each reference number corresponds to the figure in which the reference number is first used. While specific configurations and arrangements are discussed, it should be understood that this is done for illustrative purposes only. A person skilled in the relevant art will recognize that other configurations and arrangements can be used without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0021] As shown in Figures 1-5, the privacy shade of the present invention comprises a shade 100 that provides quick concealment of information displayed on a screen 102. Although the privacy shade is described herein in connection with screen 102 of a computer monitor 104, it shall be understood by those skilled in the art that the privacy shade of the present invention may

be utilized with various screens which display information, such as screens of computer monitors, television sets and DVD systems.

[0022] Shade 100 is a piece of material attached to a top portion 106 of computer monitor 104. Shade 100 accordingly covers up and conceals any information displayed on screen 102 when shade 100 is pulled over screen 102.

[0023] Any appropriate fixture or material may be used to attach shade 100 to top portion 106 of computer monitor 104. For example, shade 100 may be attached by a clip, hook, snap, an adhesive such as glue, or a hook and loop fastener such as VELCRO. Top portion 106 may be the top edge of the front screen of computer monitor 104, or may be the front edge of the top of computer monitor 104.

[0024] In one embodiment of the present invention, shade 100 is attached to computer monitor 104 by a hook and loop fastener such as VELCRO. One portion of the hook and loop fastener is placed on the center of top portion 106 of computer monitor 104, and the other portion of the hook and loop fastener is placed on the center of a top portion of shade 100. Shade 100 may accordingly be attached to computer monitor 104 by placing the two portions of the hook and loop fastener together. In another embodiment of the present invention, multiple hook and loop fasteners may be used along top portion 106 of computer monitor 104, such as a hook and loop fastener at both the right and left ends of top portion 106.

[0025] Once shade 100 is attached to computer monitor 104 such that shade 100 may cover up screen 102, shade 100 has two positions: "up" position 110 and "down" position 112.

[0026] In "down" position 112, shade 100 covers the viewing area of screen 102 and therefore provides concealment of the information displayed on screen 102. FIG. 1 is a front view of shade 100 in "down" 112 position covering screen 102 of computer monitor 104, while FIG. 2 is a side view of shade 100 in "down" 112 position covering screen 102 of computer monitor 104.

[0027] In "up" position 110, shade 100 is lifted over screen 102 and may be placed on top of computer monitor 104. Therefore, in "up" position 110, screen 102 is visible to the user. FIG. 3 is a top view of shade 100 in "up" position 110, while FIG. 4 is a side view of shade 100 in "up" position 110. In FIG. 3, shade 100 is shown rolled up and piled on top of computer monitor 104. In FIG. 4, however, shade 100 is more loosely laid over the top of computer monitor 104. The user may place shade 100 over the top of computer monitor 104 in any way they desire.

[0028] FIG. 5 illustrates shade 100 in transition between "up" position 110 and "down" position 112. The flexible material of shade 100 allows a user to simply fold shade 100 over the top of computer monitor 104. This easy maneuverability of shade 100 is beneficial to the user, and allows for quick and easy transition between "up" position 110 and "down" position 112.

[0029] Due to the easy maneuverability of shade 100, shade 100 may be used on an as needed basis. For example, a patient may unexpectedly approach a user and therefore have an opportunity to intentionally or inadvertently view the information contained on the computer screen. Shade 100 can be pulled over screen 102 quickly and easily to provide privacy of the information contained on screen 102. However, when there is no need for concealment, the user has full view of the information on screen 102. Accordingly, shade 100 is utilized only when the user needs to conceal the information located on screen 102.

[0030] The size of the shade 100 may be any appropriate size to cover screen 102. It is desirable that shade 100 be of a shape and size corresponding to the shape and size of screen 102 of computer monitor 104. However, all that is required is that shade 100 is at least large enough to cover the viewing area of screen 102, and therefore may be of a shape and size larger than the shape and size of screen 102.

[0031] For example, shade 100 may be of a rectangular shape and measure fifteen inches by fourteen inches. A rectangular shade of those measurements would cover the screen of a seventeen-inch computer monitor. However, a rectangular shade of those measurements would also cover the screen of a

smaller computer monitor. Having shade 100 be of a larger shape and size than screen 102 does not hinder the effectiveness of shade 102.

[0032] The privacy shade is made of any appropriate flexible material, such as cloth or plastic. Preferably, the privacy shade is constructed from a lightweight cotton/cotton blend material.

[0033] The lightweight, flexible material may easily be deformed into "up" position 110 or "down" position 112 as needed by the user. The user may simply fold shade 100 over the top of computer monitor 100 to reveal the information on the screen. The lightweight, flexible material therefore provides maneuverability of shade 100 that is beneficial to the user, and allows for quick and easy transition between "up" position 110 and "down" position 112.

[0034] The maneuverability of shade 100 allows the user to quickly and easily fold shade 100 over screen 102, and therefore conceal the information contained thereon. Shade 100 is useful in many industries requiring confidentiality. It is especially useful in the medical industry where protection of health information is required under The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Many medical computer programs do not have the capability to minimize the screen. Shade 100 eliminates the need to shut off the monitor and provides a reasonable effort to protect health and other confidential information from the view of patients, employees, vendors, and customers on an as needed basis. Further, shade 100 is useful in non-medical environments such as industries noted in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to quickly conceal nonpublic personal information.

[0035] While this invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.